UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.10/1991/L.3/Add.8
17 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS
Seventeenth session
10-19 April 1991
Agenda item 14

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Andrew G. BANGALI (Sierra Leone)

Chapter ___

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS AND ISSUES RELATING TO THE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COMMISSION AND THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS TO THE WORK OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

1. The Commission considered item 4 of its agenda at its 5th, 7th, 8th and 10th meetings, on 12, 15 and 16 April 1991. It had before it the reports of the Secretary-General on the contribution of the Commission and the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations to the work of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (E/C.10/1991/3) and on transnational corporations and issues relating to the environment (E/C.10/1991/3/Add.1).

ENVIRONMENT

2. In introducing the item, the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations outlined the five main themes contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/C.10/1991/3). He commended the Commission for the leading role it had been playing in defining the specific responsibilities of transnational corporations in the preparatory process for

READEX FICHE

the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and in adopting the Criteria for Sustainable Development Management, which had been cited widely. He invited the Commission to envision its role after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the early twenty-first century, including defining the future main issues of concern regarding transnational corporations and the environment. He expressed the hope that the Commission would continue its leadership role in formulating strategies for the participation of transnational corporations in the 1992 Conference and provide a positive impact on the preparatory process for the Conference.

3. Delegations congratulated the Executive Director on the analysis contained in the report prepared by the Secretariat. The report was considered to be useful as a basis for the Commission's contribution to the Conference. The report demonstrated the importance of transnational corporations in relation to environment and development, and proposed concrete ideas for mobilizing and encouraging transnational corporations in that regard. Delegations encouraged the Centre to actively participate in the preparatory process for the Conference in cooperation with other United Nations bodies. Some delegations cautioned that the proposed work by the Centre should only be carried out in areas in which the Centre was competent in relation to other parts of the United Nations system.

4. Delegations stated that transnational corporations should participate actively in international economic cooperation with respect to environmental preservation as they had a major role in research, development and dissemination of environmentally sound technologies. They should assume responsibility and cooperate in developing the right technologies for environmentally sound development. Several delegations noted that some technologies had caused environmental degradation and that transnational corporations had special responsibilities in that regard. Delegations appealed to transnational corporations to stop activities that degraded the environment and to provide technologies and resources to solve environmental problems in developing countries. One delegation expressed the view that transnational corporations should publish information on the cost of measures for environmental protection and conduct environmental audits of their activities in developing countries. Another delegation noted with interest a proposal to adopt a code of conduct for the environment and stated that environmental concerns were already included in the draft code of conduct negotiated a number of years ago.

5. A number of delegations noted that environmental costs should be borne by those responsible for creating them. The degree of commitment to correcting environmental problems must be relative to the degree to which the activity of each actor has negatively affected the ecological balance. Several delegations mentioned the many economic, social and environmental problems confronting most developing countries. Some stated that many proposals for resolving those problems were insufficient as developing countries needed resources to resolve the problems. Others stated that they were encouraged to hear that transnational corporations were developing international policies to solve environmental problems. Many delegations concluded that transnational

corporations could contribute significantly to sustainable development and were well positioned to play a leading role, owing in part to their financial flexibility and global management policies. Some delegations stressed the importance of the role of Governments in encouraging transnational corporations to take adequate environmental protection measures.

6. Delegations suggested ways to incorporate the themes expressed in the interim report for inclusion in the contribution of the Commission to the preparatory process for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, particularly in the Earth Charter and Agenda 21. Several delegations suggested the development of principles that could apply, particularly in the absence of environmental protection regulations in developing countries. Others mentioned principles related to the responsibilities of transnational corporations when adherence to international environmental law was uneven. Some delegations suggested ways that the Criteria for Sustainable Development Management could contribute to the Conference process. Studies of transnational corporations and climate change, and disclosure of information on risk were also mentioned in that regard.

7. With regard to the theme of international environmental law, some delegations noted that transnational corporations should not only try to apply the minimum agreed norms, but should also go beyond the minimum, as some already were doing in their international policies. Several delegations expressed the view that environmental standards required a mutual respect between transnational corporations and host countries.

8. Delegations expressed satisfaction with the progress of the work on the project examining various options and mechanisms to transfer environmentally sound technologies to developing countries. Questions were raised on the proposal on leasable emission permits and on coordination with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and other United Nations organizations. Other delegations expressed the need to further explore issues related to patents and intellectual property rights.

9. Several delegations expressed satisfaction with the progress of the survey of international environmental management policies and innovative practices of transnational corporations.

10. A number of delegations asked that the Centre continue to advise Governments of developing countries on the commercialization of natural resources and the negotiation of contracts and agreements with transnational corporations that had activities in areas that affect the environment.

11. Many delegations expressed concern that the proposed fund to be financed by transnational corporations to support environmental projects in developing countries would be compromised if financial contributions were inadequate. They expressed the hope that work in that area would continue as developing countries lacked financial resources to address environmental problems. Some delegations expressed concern that the proposed fund might duplicate environmental funds administered by other international organizations and suggested that transnational corporations might also contribute technology.

12. A few delegations noted the importance of environmental accounting, noting in particular the need to identify risks and liability issues.

13. Delegations noted that the Centre was coordinating with the secretariat of the Conference, in particular in relation to the work on the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Several delegations stressed the need for overall coordination with other bodies of the United Nations system, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on specific questions.

14. In conclusion, the Executive Director described ways in which the Centre was coordinating with other bodies. One example was the Centre's close working relationship with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in developing proposals on the environmental responsibilities of transnational corporations. He discussed the results of the feasibility study on a voluntary fund for transnational corporations to assist developing countries in environmental protection and explained the difficulties with the idea. None the less, as the proposed fund would be made up of voluntary contributions from transnational companies, he considered that it did not overlap with any funding arrangements using donations from Governments. In noting the concern expressed with respect to technical assistance, he said the Centre was trying, within its limited resources, to respond to the increasing volume of requests for technical assistance work in environmental areas.

Action taken by the Commission

15. The Commission:

(a) Requested that a report be submitted to the Commission at its eighteenth session, containing the final version of the comprehensive and analytical study requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1990/71, section II, paragraph 1;

(b) Requested that other projects referred to by the Council in resolution 1990/71, section II, paragraph 3 be completed;

(c) Requested that a progress report on the ongoing projects described in the report of the Secretary-General (E/C.10/1991/3/Add.1) be submitted to the Commission at its eighteenth session;

(d) Requested the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations to transmit to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development the action-oriented recommendations of the Commission regarding transnational corporations and sustainable development, along with the interim version of the comprehensive and analytical study, for consideration by the Preparatory Committee at its third session.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.10/1991/L.3/Add.9
18 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS
Seventeenth session
10-19 April 1991
Agenda item 14

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Andrew G. BANGALI (Sierra Leone)

Chapter ____

STRENGTHENING THE NEGOTIATING CAPACITY OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

1. The Commission considered item 10 of its agenda at its 11th and 12th meetings on 17 April 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the experience gained in training and the development of human resources (E/C.10/1991/13) and the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations and the activities of the joint units established with the regional commissions (E/C.10/1991/15).

2. In his introductory statement, made at the 11th meeting on 17 April, the Deputy Executive Director highlighted the developments and achievements of the training component of the Centre's technical cooperation programme. He emphasized that human resource development was a major objective of the Centre's technical cooperation programme, which aimed at inculcating skills to enhance the indigenous capabilities of host developing country officials in handling issues involving transnational corporations. He reported that during the period under review, the Centre was involved in 30 workshops and seminars in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. The workshops

dealt with a wide array of subjects, such as the negotiation and drafting of joint ventures, international construction contracts, management contracts, mining and petroleum agreements, transfer of technology agreements, loan agreements and debt restructuring arrangements with transnational banks; foreign investment policies, the economic and legal environment for foreign direct investments, financing of highway construction with foreign investment; control of transfer pricing practices by transnational corporations; accounting with respect to joint ventures; international arbitration with respect to investment disputes; and training of local entrepreneurs to establish linkages with transnational corporations. For illustrative purposes, he cited workshops organized in Nigeria and for the Committee on Finance and Banking of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

3. The Deputy Executive Director drew the Commission's attention to the training assistance being provided by the Centre to institutions of higher learning and institutes of public administration and management through appropriate training programmes in transnational corporations-related curricula designed for graduate studies in economics, business administration and law. He also reported on the entrepreneurship training programme (EMPRETEC) to promote the creation and growth of innovative small- and medium-sized enterprises using linkages with transnational corporations. That programme, which was being implemented in recognition of the central role of the private sector in development strategies, was being undertaken primarily in Africa and Latin America.

4. Finally, the Deputy Executive Director stressed the role of the Centre's human resource development programme within the priority themes of the United Nations Development Programme during its Fifth Cycle Programme. In conclusion, he expressed the Centre's appreciation to recipient countries that had made part of their UNDP-IPF resources available and to the donor countries that had provided contributions to the Centre's Trust Fund.

5. All the delegations that took part in the discussion expressed support for the Centre's advisory and training assistance. Several delegations whose countries had been the recipients of those services during 1990 cited the assistance provided and the impact on their development. There were also particular references by a number of delegations to the EMPRETEC programme, which had contributed to the development and growth of small- and medium-sized enterprises with linkages to transnational corporations. Other representatives cited the work of the Centre in regional integration efforts, particularly in the African region and in ASEAN. Referring to the ongoing negotiations at the Uruguay Round, one delegation proposed that the Centre should provide further advisory and training assistance to developing countries in the services sector, including communications, publishing, mass media and construction, and assist in the revision of laws and regulations dealing with intellectual property rights. Another delegation suggested that technical assistance focus on the modernization of industrial and agricultural sectors and on the development of capital markets and the insurance industry. Another delegation stressed the importance of the Centre's technical cooperation programme in providing the necessary support to countries in

Central and Eastern Europe in their efforts to re-integrate in the world economy.

6. Referring to document E/C.10/1991/13, one delegation expressed appreciation for the evaluation made of the training programmes of the Centre. It was suggested that more detailed information should be provided in future evaluation and that the Centre should consider the use of external consultants to undertake the evaluation. The same delegation also welcomed the effort to target the poorer developing countries and stated that the technical cooperation programme was the cornerstone of the Centre's activities. Another delegation cited the contribution of the Centre's technical cooperation programme in ensuring lasting relationships between transnational corporations and host developing countries through which well-informed partners tended to negotiate balanced and mutually beneficial arrangements that were, consequently, enduring. He also noted the complementarity and resulting synergy of the vital analytical work and the equally important technical cooperation programme of the Centre.

7. Several delegations emphasized the need for continuous financial support for the Centre's programme of technical cooperation. Recipient countries of the Centre's technical assistance and donor countries called upon other Member States to contribute to the Centre's Trust Fund for Technical Cooperation.

8. The Deputy Executive Director expressed the appreciation of the Centre for the statements made by delegations acknowledging the usefulness of advisory and training services provided by the Centre. He noted the recommendations made by a number of delegations on specific areas in which the Centre could further contribute in the development process and on future evaluation exercises. Lastly, he thanked the donors to the Centre's Trust Fund for their continuous support.

Action taken by the Commission

9. The Commission:

(a) Took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the experience gained in training and the development of human resources (E/C.10/1991/13);

(b) Reaffirmed the importance it attached to the technical cooperation programme of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its eighteenth session on the programme of technical cooperation and to continue to review experiences gained in that programme.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.10/1991/L.3/Add.10
18 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS
Seventeenth session
10-19 April 1991
Agenda item 14

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Andrew G. BANGALI (Sierra Leone)

Chapter ___

ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS CENTRE ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

1. The Commission considered agenda item 12 at its 12th meeting, on 17 April 1991. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations and the activities of the joint units established with the regional commissions (E/C.10/1991/15); and

(b) Note by the Secretariat on the proposed work programme for the biennium 1992-1993 of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, including the joint units established with the regional commissions (E/C.10/1991/CRP.1).

2. In introducing the item, the Executive Director of the Centre reviewed the United Nations programme on transnational corporations, particularly in the light of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993, and invited the Commission to comment on the Centre's proposed work programme.

3. He said that the activities of the Centre during the reporting period were aimed at the implementation of a large body of resolutions and decisions of intergovernmental bodies. He noted that the execution of the work programme required a certain degree of improvisation, given that the Centre's rapidly expanding mandate was not consistent with the "zero real growth" of the regular budget resources.

4. The Executive Director expressed appreciation for the financial support of the Governments which had donated extrabudgetary funds, particularly the Governments of China, Denmark, Finland, France, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Zaire. The Centre also expressed its gratitude to the Governments of Denmark, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands for their sponsorship of associate experts or scholars in residence in the Centre and its joint units with the regional commissions.

5. The Executive Director also informed the Commission of the way the Centre was organizing the research and technical cooperation activities. In that regard, he mentioned specifically the three main functions of the Centre, namely normative support, its analytical function and advisory and training functions.

6. He explained that in its normative support function, the Centre was assisting in the development and adoption of international arrangements and international standards to supplement national laws as they related to foreign direct investment and the activities of transnational corporations. He specifically noted that international standards of accounting and reporting and standards of environmental protection and industrial safety were two fields in which the assistance of the Centre had most often been sought in recent times. The Executive Director suggested that the Centre's analytical function evolved in a number of subject areas that required in-depth analysis and further international action. In that regard, he specifically mentioned the policies of the new open-door countries and countries in transition, and the issues of privatization, international environmental management, environmental accounting, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, the phenomena of small- and medium-sized transnational corporations and the European single market and its implications for foreign investment. He also illustrated the increasing policy orientation of the research programme where many of the Centre's technical papers offered valuable background material for decision-makers in Governments and in the public and private sectors. Finally, he mentioned the increasing linkages between research projects and the Centre's programme of technical cooperation and the integrated nature of many individual studies. Such a comprehensive approach allowed the proposal of suggestions and recommendations of particular use to Governments in the development or revision of their national policies with regard to foreign direct investment. He informed the Commission that the Centre had commenced work on the Fifth Survey on the role of transnational corporations in the world economy, which could provide the international community with an important outlook on the world economy, in which transnational corporations were the key actors.

7. The Executive Director also underlined the importance of the Centre's advisory and training functions. The Centre maintained the reputation of a major international provider of expert services and source of specialized knowledge in the area of foreign investment. He gave examples of ongoing innovative projects geared towards facilitating mutually beneficial linkages between transnational corporations and countries hosting foreign investment.

8. The Executive Director suggested that the Commission could increasingly have the capacity to make important assessments that could shape international action in the area of foreign direct investment and could serve as a forum where an international investment strategy aimed at the stimulation of the flow of investment capital, technology and skills to host developing countries could be developed. In order to strengthen that capacity of the Commission, the Centre had organized, and would be prepared to do so in the future, a series of pre-session and in-session expert seminars in which leading international experts could introduce the technical intricacies of various subjects on the international investment agenda.

9. The Executive Director also expressed his appreciation for the contributions made by the expert advisers. Their experience and expertise significantly advanced the level of the Commission's deliberations and allowed it to come up with sound policy-oriented recommendations.

10. In conclusion, the Executive Director paid tribute to Sidney Dell, Executive Director of the Centre from 1982 to 1984, and one of the United Nations most outstanding economists, who passed away early in 1991. Mr. Dell had exerted a unique influence in shaping international ideas and mechanisms governing trade, aid, investment and monetary relations between developed and developing countries.

11. Most delegations commended the work of the Centre and the exemplary quality of its research and technical cooperation activities, which was attributed to the high professionalism, extensive experience and skills of the Centre's staff, experts and consultants. In the opinion of those delegations, the report of accomplishments of the Centre since the last session of the Commission was impressive, particularly in the light of existing resource constraints under the regular budget and extrabudgetary funds. Satisfaction was expressed about the measures the Executive Director had undertaken to enhance the programme's management. Particular mention in that regard was made of the setting up of the Programme Review Group, which considered new requests for technical assistance and advisory services and reviewed the implementation of ongoing projects.

12. Many delegations stressed their support of the Centre's technical cooperation programme, which was aimed at strengthening the negotiating capacity of host developing countries in their dealings with transnational corporations. The delegations said that they attached increasing importance to that activity which should be further reinforced. In that regard, those delegations supported the proposed scope and contents of advisory and training projects proposed for the period 1992-1993.

13. One delegation was of the view that the Centre's work in the area of technical cooperation should be more closely coordinated with national investment centres established in many developing countries. That delegation felt that such coordination was needed for strengthening the working linkages between institutions and organizations of the United Nations system and those outside it. It was also suggested that there should be closer cooperation with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the field of development and promotion of small- and medium-sized enterprises and in the area of organization of investment promotion tours.

14. Several delegations noted that dramatic changes had taken place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe where radical economic and social reforms were being undertaken. The process of transition from centrally planned to market-oriented economies bore both major risks and opportunities. The success of the reforms would depend on the ability of countries of the region to integrate effectively into the world economy and to join the global network of trade, investment and financial arrangements. Those delegations emphasized that the Centre might play an important role in assisting the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in that endeavour, particularly through providing information upon request on transnational corporations, issuing publications on national legal frameworks relating to foreign direct investment which had been established in Eastern and Central Europe, organizing training workshops and seminars on the development of entrepreneurial and management skills and arranging for study tours. One delegation pointed out that the Centre's technical cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe was of universal significance since its results could be used by a large group of countries which pursued more open-to-the-world-economy policies, particularly developing countries. Appreciation was expressed to the Centre for being one of the first United Nations departments to respond in a practical and efficient manner to the decisions of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly.

15. One delegation, expressing the views of many others, indicated that major developments and political changes occurring in certain parts of the world would carry opportunities for many developed countries. However, there were apprehensions among least developed countries with regard to the impacts of these developments on the social and economic conditions of developing countries.

16. The same delegation expressed satisfaction with the Centre's continued priority attention to the execution of training and advisory activities in many developing countries. The efficiency of such activities was illustrated by several delegations through references to specific country projects which the Centre had been undertaking in various fields and sectors of the economy. The delegation concluded by saying that the Centre was a unique multilateral institution to which its country turned in difficult times.

17. One delegation recalled General Assembly resolution 45/188 on entrepreneurship. It felt that there was a close relationship between entrepreneurship and foreign direct investment which implied that the Centre could play an active role in the implementation of this resolution.

18. Delegations, expressing their views on the comprehensive information system, indicated the usefulness of the information activities of the Centre and urged it to maintain the attained level of that activity.

19. During the discussion of the comprehensive information system, several delegations made suggestions with regard to future research projects. Among the subjects of particular interest to Governments, the following were mentioned: the interrelationship between foreign direct investment, trade and finance; transfer of technology; transnational corporations and human resource development; assessment of the effects of transnational corporations on specific economic sectors of host countries; and new trends and developments in the process of transnationalization.

20. Delegations welcomed the more active participation of the expert advisers in the work of the Commission and the Centre, particularly through in-session seminars. The opinion was expressed that the contribution of the outstanding international personalities, who were expert advisers, should be further maximized.

21. In his concluding remarks, the Executive Director expressed gratitude for the high assessment of the work of the Centre. Given that the Centre had succeeded within relatively modest resources available in making a tangible impact in the countries which received its technical assistance, he called on Governments to consider further support to the Centre's trust funds. In responding to the specific observations of delegations, the Executive Director gave examples of the Centre's cooperation with national investment centres. He also stated that the Centre would continue to exercise its role as the United Nations focal point on all matters related to foreign direct investment and transnational corporations, a function which required extensive coordination and cooperation with numerous agencies and organizations within and outside the United Nations system.

Action taken by the Commission

22. The Commission:

(a) Took note of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations and the activities of the joint units established with the regional commissions (E/C.10/1991/15) and the note by the Secretariat on the proposed work programme for the biennium 1992-1993 of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, including the joint units established with the regional commissions (E/C.10/1991/CRP.1);

(b) Took note of the note by the Secretariat on the question of expert advisers (E/C.10/1991/16). The Commission welcomed the more active participation of expert advisers in its work and requested the Executive Director of the Centre to explore ways of maximizing their contribution to the programme on transnational corporations, including, when necessary, by co-opting ad hoc expert advisers;

(c) Requested the Secretary-General to take into account, in the future work of the Centre, the views expressed by delegations at its seventeenth session, and to submit a report to the Commission at its eighteenth session on the activities of the Centre, including the activities of the joint units established with the regional commissions.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/C.10/1991/L.3/Add.11
18 April 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS
Seventeenth session
10-19 April 1991
Agenda item 14

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS SEVENTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Andrew G. BANGALI (Sierra Leone)

Chapter ___

PROVISIONAL AGENDAS FOR THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH SESSIONS

1. The Commission considered item 13 of its agenda at its 13th meeting, on 18 April 1991. It had before it an informal note by the Bureau containing the draft provisional agendas for the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions, together with an indicative list of requested documentation.

2. The Chairman of the Commission opened the discussion and stated that the Bureau had considered ways to allow more in-depth consideration of items on the Commission's annual agenda without sacrificing the scope of the Commission's work and had agreed that that could be done through the biennialization of selected items. Accordingly, the Bureau, with the assistance of the Executive Director of the Centre, had prepared provisional agendas for the next two sessions of the Commission.

3. The Executive Director of the Centre elaborated on the proposals made by the Bureau and indicated that biennialization would not affect the Centre's work, which would continue on all items and would be reported upon annually to the Commission in the report of the Secretary-General on activities of the Centre. In taking up that report, the Commission could make recommendations on all pertinent matters.

4. Delegations welcomed the proposals and noted that biennialization would permit the Commission to take up new items without straining its capacity to consider existing items. In that context, future topics were suggested, including human resource development. It was also noted that environment might be a special item warranting consideration at both the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions in order to prepare for, and follow-up on, the results of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in 1992.

5. Clarification was sought on the need for item 8 of the provisional agenda for the eighteenth session, which referred to the provisional agenda of the nineteenth session, in the light of the proposal to decide upon the contents of both provisional agendas at the current session.

6. In response to the issues raised in the discussion, the Executive Director stated that environment provided a good illustration of the distinction between in-depth discussion of the type sought by including separate items on the provisional agenda and ad hoc discussion under the catch-all item on the activities of the Centre. Thus, the Commission could be expected to have an in-depth discussion on environment at its eighteenth session to finalize its contribution to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and also an ad hoc discussion on environment at its nineteenth session on any new directions to be provided to the activities of the Centre in follow-up to the Conference. He also clarified that item 8 of the provisional agenda on the eighteenth session should be seen as providing an opportunity to fine-tune the provisional agenda for the nineteenth session on the basis of the biennial format agreed upon at the present session.

Action taken by the Commission

7. The Commission adopted the draft provisional agendas for the eighteenth and nineteenth sessions as proposed by the Bureau. The Commission also requested that the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Centre be exempted from the standard page-limit set for documentation, in order to allow for comprehensive annual reporting on all pertinent activities.